

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STOCKH 01046 151132Z
ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3291
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

UNCLAS STOCKHOLM 1046

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPM, SW

SUBJECT: SUPPORT INCREASING FOR SWEDEN'S OPPOSITION PARTIES

1. WITH 18 MONTHS DOWN AND 18 TO GO IN THE SWEDISH TRIENNIAL ELECTION CYCLE, A NEWLY RELEASED SIFO (SWEDISH INSTITUTE OF OPINAON RESEARCH) OPINION POLL OF PARTY PREFERENCES HAS TAKEN ON A SPECIAL SYMBOLIC MEANING. THE TREND AT THE HALF-WAY MARK IS RUNNING DECIDELY IN FAVOR OF THE OPPOSITION SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND COMMUNISTS WHO ARE WIDENING THEIR LEAD OVER THE CENTER/ MODERATE/LIBERAL GOVERNMENT COALITION. THE GAP NOW STANDS AT 8 PERCENT, WITH THE SOCIALIST COMBINED OPPOSITION AT 53 PERCENT VERSUS 45 PERCENT FOR THE THREE GOVERNMENT PARTIES. THIS 8 PERCENT GAP SHOULD BE VIEWED AGAINST A 6 PERCENT GAP LAST MONTH AND A 1.5 PERCENT GAP A YEAR AGO.

2. TO THE QUESTION, "WHICH PARTY DO YOU LIKE BEST TODAY," A RANDOM SAMPLE OF 1067 SWEDISH VOTERS RESPONDED AS FOLLOWS:

	FEB 1978	JAN 1978	ELECTION 1976
MODERATE	15.5	17.0	15.6
LIBERAL	10.5	9.0	11.1

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CENTER	19.0	20.0	24.0
SOCIAL DEMOCRATS	47.5	48.0	42.7
VPK	5.5	4.0	4.8
APK	0.4	0.3	-0-

3. THE SWEDISH PRESS IS GIVING PROMINENT ATTENTION TO THE IMPROVED PERFORMANCE OF THE VPK, UP 1.5 PERCENT IN THE LAST

MONTH AND NOW COMFORTABLY ABOVE THE MINIMUM 4 PERCENT REQUIRED FOR REPRESENTATION IN THE RIKSDAG. VPK'S RECOVERY FROM LAST YEAR'S SPLINTERING PROCESS, WHEN THE ORTHODOX PRO-MOSCOW WING BROKE AWAY, WOULD APPEAR NOW TO BE COMPLETE. THE PARTY IS ATTRACTING ITS NEW VOTES FROM THE RANKS OF YOUNG WORKERS WHOSE PARTY IDENTIFICATION IS NOT YET FIRMLY MOLDED AND WHO, IN VOTING COMMUNIST, ARE REGISTERING THEIR DISSATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT HANDLING OF CURRENT ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES.

4. SURPRISINGLY, VPK'S GAIN HAS BEEN AT CENTER PARTY EXPENSE. THE DISAFFECTED HOUNG VOTERS WHO TURNED TO THE CENTER AS A PROTEST OUTLET IN 1976 HAVE APPARENTLY NOT FOUND IT A COMFORTABLE POLITICAL BASE. MIRRORING THE CENTER PARTY DECLINE HAS BEEN A PARALLEL DECLINE OF CONFIDENCE IN THE CENTER PARTY'S PRIME MINISTER, THORBJORN FALLDIN. FALLDIN'S CONFIDENCE FACTOR, AS MEASURED IN THE SAME SIFO POLL, SHOWS A PARTICULARLY SHARP DECLINE SINCE THE LAST ELECTION--DOWN FROM 25 PERCENT TO 19 PERCENT AMONG VOTERS IN GENERAL AND FROM 68 PERCENT TO 52 PERCENT AMONG CENTER PARTY AFFILIATES. FALLDIN, WHO EARLIER WAS PRAISED FOR HIS HIGHLY PRINCIPLED APPROACH MIXED WITH A PROPER DASH OF CAUTION IS NOW BEING WIDELY CRITICIZED AS WEAK AND UNSURE OF HIMSELF.

5. COMMENT: WITH VOTER TRENDS MOVING DECIDEDLY IN THE UNCLASSIFIED

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DIRECTION OF THE SOCIALIST OPPOSITION, PRESSURES WILL BUILD IN THE HOME STRETCH FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO CLARIFY ITS IMAGE AND BUILD A CREDIBLE RECORD TO PRESENT TO THE ELECTORATE IN 1979. THE GOVERNMENT WILL FIRST OF ALL NEED TO RESOLVE THE NUCLEAR POWER ISSUE AND THEN GET A GRIP ON THE TROUBLESOM ECONOMIC PROBLEMS IF IT IS TO REVERSE THIS WIDENING GAP AND STAND ANY CHANCE OF RETAINING POWER AFTER 1979.
PERRY

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